



Complete  
guide to  
accessible  
travel

ROLLING  
INSPIRATION

Rolling Inspiration is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.

Compiled by Rolling Inspiration (2025).

# Introduction

Mandy Latimore shares her years of experience travelling as a wheelchair user in this travel deep dive

**T**ravelling as a person with a disability need not be the daunting prospect that most people think it is. With the right attitude, lots of planning, and the ability to “make a plan” (adapt to the situation), travel for everyone can be great fun. As a person with a disability for the past 45 years, I’ve travelled the world and done some weird and wonderful things. It can be done! One needs to also be aware that even with the most careful plans, things do go wrong.

be in your travels. Most hotels have e-mail addresses that you can use to enquire about specific needs, such as wheelchair-friendly rooms with roll-in showers.

Know your needs, but also what you would be able to settle for should the suppliers not have the exact facilities that you require, or any facilities to cater for people with disabilities. When planning your holiday, there are a number of factors which need to be put together in order to decide on the best value for money possible.

Here are my tips, advice and all the information that you need to build the perfect trip. 



**You need to be resourceful and sometimes just downright bossy to get your way!**



**Mandy Latimore** is a consultant in the disability sector in the fields of travel and access.

Get in touch: [mandy@noveltravel.co.za](mailto:mandy@noveltravel.co.za)

You need to be resourceful and sometimes just downright bossy to get your way! Yet, you will probably come across many people who are extremely eager to assist in any way they can.

When you decide to travel, first you need to research the destination intensively. Do some research on the internet or talk to people who have been there already. The more you know about a place, the more confident you will

## Contents

General travel tips	1
Important documents	2
Visa application	4
Travel insurance	6
Foreign currency	7
Air travel	9
Road travel	12
Rail travel	15
Accessible accommodation	16



## ACCESS UNIVERSAL SOLUTIONS (PTY) LTD

PROFESSIONAL CONSULTING WITHIN THE DISABILITY SECTOR

Universal Access assessment of the built environment

Facilitation sessions on Disability Sensitization and awareness for employers and companies

Accessible travel consultant for travel advice

**MANDY LATIMORE**

*Improving access and attitudes for all*

CELL: +27 (0)83 283 3370  
E-MAIL: [mandy@universalsolutions.co.za](mailto:mandy@universalsolutions.co.za)  
or [mandy@noveltravel.co.za](mailto:mandy@noveltravel.co.za)



# General travel tips

## **BUDGET AND COMPANY**

Budget is the most important factor. The amount of money that you have to spend will decide how far you can travel, which mode of transport you will use, and for how long you can be away.

Similarly, the number of people you are travelling with will determine which modes of transport and what type of accommodation you choose. If you have a family or are travelling with a caregiver, you might choose a hotel with meals included or perhaps a self-catering unit with multiple bedrooms to accommodate everyone.

## **DESTINATION**

When you know what budget you have available and who will be accompanying you, you can start looking at various areas that you are interested in visiting. Do you want to relax at the beach or in the bush? Do you want to see a city with lots of sightseeing opportunities? Or are you more interested in relaxing while your kids rush about? Do you want to cruise or be land-based?

Once you have narrowed down your options, it is time to make a decision. Research each destination before travelling so that you can know what you want to do or experience on the trip. Make sure that you have enough time allocated in each place so that you can enjoy all the sites and places that you want to visit.

Make use of tour guides in places where you do not speak the language. You get much more out of your trip when a local gives you information about the city or sites.

Be sure to check the climate before you leave so that you can pack the correct clothing. Ensure that your caregiver, friends or family pack comfortable walking shoes for the trip!

## **CHECK THE ACCESSIBILITY**

It is advised to double check whether the places that you plan on visiting are accessible. An internet search for “wheelchair-

friendly” establishments is the first step. Then, go to the individual webpages to see if their facilities do meet your needs.

If you like the venue, give them a call to confirm the facilities that you need are available, for example an interleading room or roll-in shower. Ensure that you can move between your room and the general areas, like restaurants, easily.

## **GETTING ALL THE PAPER WORK**

Before a trip, check the expiry dates of the travel documents that you need for yourself and your car. Passports, driver’s licence and vehicle licences all have expiry dates. It is much cheaper to renew these documents than reapplying.

## **MEET THE REQUIREMENTS**

Please check the requirements of the visa that you are applying for ahead of time. There might be medical requirements like inoculations, medications or practises. Sometimes, there need to be arranged up to two weeks prior to departure.

## **SOME INSURANCE FOR EASE OF MIND**

It is highly recommended to have travel insurance even when travelling locally as holidays are usually quite expensive. If the holiday needs to be cancelled for health reasons, then at least you will be able to get your money back. This should include general cover cancellation, curtailment and delays; loss of items like your luggage or cash and documents, which can easily get stolen or lost; and comprehensive medical cover.

## **CONVERTING TO A FOREIGN CURRENCY**

Before leaving, you have to arrange foreign currency. There are various ways of obtaining foreign currency such as banks, specific companies (some even offer the service to your door) or the Bureaux de Change. You can organise cash, traveller’s cheques, cash passports or allocate an amount on your existing credit card. 

# Important documents

Checking the expiry dates for various travel documents are important for both local and international travel. Here is everything that you need to know about acquiring and renewing your passport, driver's and vehicle licence.

## DRIVER'S LICENCE

To renew your driver's licence, you should apply at least four weeks before the expiry date. If you apply after the date, you will need to apply for a temporary licence at an extra cost.

This will act as your official licence while your licence renewal is being processed. This usually takes between four to six weeks.

If your licence expires, it won't be necessary to redo your driving test; however, you will need to test your eyesight. You can have your eyes tested at an optometrist and submit the report with your documentation at the licence testing centre.

Alternatively, you can have your eyes tested at the centre, but this does make the renewal process longer; thus, it is advisable to have it done at an optometrist. There are many optometrists designated for licence tests who offer the service free of charge.

You can find the renewal form [online](#). Download the form titled "DL1: Application for renewal of driving licence card" and complete it.

Once filled in, take this form, your eye-test report, ID with a copy of your ID (or valid South African passport), your old driver's licence, four black and white photos (of which not all may be used), proof of residence (for example, a utility bill or levy statement) and the necessary cash to pay for the renewal.

If you live in an informal settlement, you can take along a letter with an official date stamp from your ward councillor confirming your residential address.

## VEHICLE LICENCE

These licences are renewable every 12 months. You need to renew it before the expiry date otherwise you will be liable for penalties and arrears. You do get a 21-day grace period after the expiry date stated on your licence disk.

To renew this licence you need the following documentation:

- Your current ID document.
- Cash to cover the necessary fees as some post office counters don't accept card payments.
- Proof of your address (for example a utility bill displaying your name or a letter from your ward councillor if you live in an informal settlement).
- A completed Motor vehicle licence renewal notice (MVL2) or the completed Application for Licensing of Motor Vehicle (ALV) if you didn't receive a MVL2.

All the necessary forms can be found on the National Traffic Information System [website](#).

It is advisable to also take the green form that you received the year before with you as this has all the relevant technical information about the vehicle on it. You may have to complete the form at the post office or licencing department.

## PASSPORT

A passport can't be renewed. You have to apply for a new one once your current passport has expired. If you are planning to travel, you should apply for a new one before the expiry date of your current passport so that the new passport will be processed and available before your travels.

This is also important as your passport needs to be valid for another 30 days after your date of return.

Additionally, your passport should have at least two blank pages for every entry and exit stamp for the countries that you are visiting.

If you need a visa there needs to be two blank pages facing each other – one for the visa and one for the entry stamp.

You are able to apply for a temporary travel document in an emergency, but many countries do not accept these documents as valid travel documentation. Confirm whether the country you are visiting accepts temporary passports before you apply.

Passports issued to a person over the age of 16 years are valid for 10 years. For anyone under 16 years, a passport is valid for only five years. If you are applying for the first time, you need a South African identity number.

To apply for a passport, you need the following documents:

- A completed passport application form (DHA-73).
- An original and copy of your ID document or a birth certificate if the person applying is under 16 years old.
- The existing passport.
- A loss of report form (DHA-335) and police report if your old passport has been stolen.
- Two colour photographs that comply with the ID and passport specifications.
- Money for the prescribed fee.

Take note that some Smart Card offices take digital pictures. These are not required, but it is recommended to take them just in case. If the person applying for a passport is under 18 years old, then a parental consent letter is needed to issue the passport.

Passport return times can vary between two weeks to two months depending on whether you submit at a Smart Card office or not, and how big the backlog may be.

There are now mini home affairs offices within the various big banks that assists persons with disabilities as the standard home affairs offices are often not accessible.

Of course, there are always private companies who will submit and collect on your behalf, but this process can be expensive and can take much longer.

To ensure that you are able to travel whenever you feel like it, ensure that you have recorded the relevant dates to allow for renewal before your important documents expire to save you time and extra money. **R**

## DOCUMENT RENEWAL

When renewing your licences, remember the following documents,

### Driver's Licence

- The completed application for renewal of driving licence form (DL1).
- ID with a copy of your ID (or valid South African passport).
- Your old driver's licence.
- Four black and white photos.
- Proof of residence (like a utility bill or levy statement).
- The necessary cash.



### Vehicle Licence

- Your current ID document.
- The necessary cash.
- Proof of your address.
- A completed Motor vehicle licence renewal notice (MVL2) or the completed Application for Licensing of Motor Vehicle (ALV) if you didn't receive a MVL2.



It is recommended to take cash as card payments aren't always accepted.

If you live in an informal settlement, you can use a letter from your ward councillor as your proof of address.

### Passport

- A completed passport application form (DHA-73).
- An original and copy of your ID document or a birth certificate if the person applying is under 16 years old.
- The existing passport.
- A loss of report form (DHA-335) and police report if your old passport has been stolen.
- Two colour photographs that comply with the ID and passport specifications.
- The necessary cash.



# Visa application

A fellow friend asked for advice with regards to getting visas for Europe and the United Kingdom (UK) for him and his caregiver. After giving him the standard suggestions below, he went off to make the various appointments with the different visa processing companies only to come up against a brick wall!

Despite starting over two months before the travel date, he was unable to book a date to go into the processing company for his biometrics. Various companies offer a “premium service” that gets you better dates, but at a price.

Despite paying all these costs and enlisting a visa company (at more costs), he was still without his one visa three days before departure! He changed his flights only to have the visa come through the next day.

So, how do you get a visa? In the past, you were able to hand the required documents, photos, your passport and completed application forms to a company that would go and stand in the queues and get your visa processed for you.

With the increased security measures, you need to be at the visa processing centres in person for an interview and to enrol your biometric information (your fingerprints and a photograph). This is not an easy process if you are a person with a disability!

## GENERAL TIPS FOR VISA APPLICATIONS

It is important to keep the following in mind when applying for your visa:

- Always start the process as soon as possible so that you have sufficient time to gather all the documents and book appointments.
- Check if a visa is required for the country that you are visiting as well as the kind of visa required. You can either search for this information online or ask your travel.
- Remember you may have to get multiple visas if you are traveling to different countries. For the Schengen states (in Europe), you have to apply to the country that you will spend the most time in, not necessarily the one that you start in.
- It is important to check the requirements for the visa for which you are applying. Specifically, it is important to check if there are any medical requirements, for example, a yellow fever inoculation or anti-malaria medication or practices. These sometimes need to be arranged up to two weeks prior to departure.
- If you’ve travelled to the country or region before, it is still recommended to check the visa requirements as they might have changed.
- Have a valid passport with sufficient open pages for the visa to be entered. A minimum of two free pages is acceptable. Your passport expiry date must be at least six months after your return date.
- Should you have a valid visa in one passport that hasn’t expired, you need to staple the existing expired or full passport onto the new valid one.
- Make an appointment with the relevant visa processing office closest to you. Payment can be made using EFT or at your appointment using your credit card.

## DOCUMENTS REQUIRED

The following documents are often required when applying for a visa:

- The original air ticket and proof of accommodation are required by most countries. Should you be staying with family or friends, they have to send an invitation letter that states their address and the period for which they will host you. Should the visa require an original letter, your family can e-mail the letter directly to the visa office. You must include a copy of the letter with your application.
- Proof of funds need to be show with three months original bank statements along with as a letter from your bank stating that you are using your credit card and the maximum value you may place on it. With the new banking apps, you can usually get these statements directly from the app.

- Travel insurance is mandatory for most international destinations and highly recommended as comprehensive insurance will cover costs for various situations such as medical emergencies, loss of luggage, cancellation and curtailment of trip. Read the insurance policies carefully and always take enough insurance to cover the basic expenses of your trip and a minimum of R10 million medical cover.
- Photographs of various sizes are needed for the visa application. It is recommended to take your visa requirements form with to any outlet that provides passport photos to ensure the correct sizes are printed. You may be required to have biometric photographs taken as well.
- A letter to prove your employment is needed. It should state that you are in a permanent position with the company, your leave has been approved, your exact dates of travel, and that you will be returning to the company after your leave. Should you be the owner of the company, your accountant or a fellow director must sign the letter.
- When travelling with a minor, your marriage certificate is required. If you are divorced, you require a letter of consent from the other parent.

It is important to make copies of all the documents that are required. The originals will be returned to you and the copies kept.

### THE APPOINTMENT

Make sure that you are in time for your allocated appointment time, even though you may have to wait to see someone.

Visa processing officers may be quite officious and they are very strict about their working times. Often one has delivery times and collection times. Please read the requirements form carefully.

Most process times vary from seven to 10 working days. Emergency visas will be issued in the case of a true emergency. You will have to supply documentation to prove this. You are also able to apply for priority service at an extra cost.

### THE BIOMETRICS

All visa applicants, aside for those benefiting from a limited number of exemptions and exceptions, require biometric data. This includes a 10-digit fingers scan and a digital photograph.

You will have to go to your nearest visa application centre in person to provide your biometrics. Your visa application will not be processed until you have provided the necessary biometric information.

The finger scans are electronic so staff do not need to use any ink, liquid or chemicals. You will have your digital photograph taken at the same time and the whole procedure should take no more than five minutes to complete.

You should make sure that you do not have any decoration (such as henna), or any cuts or other markings on your fingertips before having your finger scans.

No sunglasses, hats or head coverings are allowed for the digital photographs unless these are for cultural or religious reasons; however, even then, it may not cover your face.

You should also make sure that if you have any cuts and bruises on your face, they have healed or disappeared before you have your photograph taken.

### VISA FOR CAREGIVERS

If you have a carer accompanying you on your travels, please ensure the following is in place:

- Their South African work permit is in order should they have a passport from another African country.
- Their documents are submitted with yours, and their appointment is at the same time as yours. This should ensure that the visas are processed at the same time.
- They are included in your travel insurance.

Should you be visiting the UK, you will need to apply for a special carer visa in order for your caregiver to accompany you. **R**

# Travel insurance

Travel insurance is highly recommended, even for local travel, as holidays are usually quite expensive. If they need to be cancelled for health reasons, you will be able to get your money back. It is imperative in today's world to have travel insurance when travelling outside of your country. Your insurance should include general cover for cancellations, curtailment and delays, for loss items like luggage, cash or documents (any item that is easily stolen or lost), and comprehensive medical cover.

When purchasing an air ticket with a credit card, there is free cover on the ticket included. However, this is often not sufficient enough and should be "topped up" as our current exchange rate is not favourable. Always ask the bank or your travel agent for these options.

Some medical aid schemes cover international travel, but it is not automatic. You need to ask for a letter from your medical aid that confirms that you are covered for the dates of your trip. The letter should include their emergency contact numbers should you require assistance.

Sufficient medical insurance cover is also a requirement for applying for a visa. You should ensure your cover is sufficient before applying as they can reject your application based on your medical insurance, or lack thereof.

There are various travel insurance options available for the traveller. These should be compared to ensure you find the most comprehensive cover that you can afford. There are travel insurance companies that offer comprehensive policies. I always look at Travel Insurance Consultants (TIC) for a baseline. They offer cover for both leisure and business and options for youths, seniors and groups.

These are some the important cover benefits that you should be checking to

have the sufficient cover (taken from the TIC policy options):

- Medical and related expenses (such as illness or injury);
- War and terrorism;
- Medical transportation, repatriation and evacuation;
- Repatriation of children or travel companion;
- Burial, cremation or return of mortal remains;
- Compassionate emergency visit;
- Daily hospital cash benefit during your journey;
- Accidental total permanent disablement;
- International journey cancellation, extension or postponement;
- Missed connection;
- Travel delay;
- Weather conditions;
- Travel supplier insolvency;
- Denied visa;
- Hijack, hostage or wrongful detention;
- Legal expenses;
- Cash and documents;
- Luggage delay; and
- Car rental excess waiver.

Please remember that insurance is calculated based on the length of your stay with different rates for various cover periods and age groups. You can usually get group cover if there are a minimum of 10 persons travelling on the same itinerary. Children up to the age of 21 years old can share cover with their parents.

You should purchase your cover as soon as your air ticket has been purchased in order to make any claim (in case of cancellation or curtailment before departure date). In order to claim, you need to hold a departure and return air ticket.

Whichever option you choose, ensure that you are covered so that you have recourse to assist yourself and your family financially should your trip be disrupted in any way. **R**

# Foreign currency

Before you leave, you have to arrange foreign currency. There are various ways of obtaining foreign currency, namely, through the banks, from Bureaux de Change, and from specific companies that offer the service (usually to your door).

Not all branches of the banks have a foreign exchange desk, so you might have to travel to another branch and deal with personnel that do not know you.

In order to get foreign currency, you have to have a valid ID, passport, proof of travel and residence. You will also be asked to make a payment to a participating branch of the banks or bureaux de change.

You can only apply for foreign exchange from 60 days before the departure date up to 24 hours before departure.

You can organise cash, traveller's cheques, cash passports or allocate an amount on your existing credit card. Should you be taking large amounts of cash, 48 hours are required to get the correct currency.

## CREDIT CARDS

You can apply for an amount to be placed onto your existing credit card as long as it does not exceed your limit. You then use your credit card as normal.

As each transaction gets processed, the exchange rate from the country of the purchase on the date of transaction process gets converted into South African Rands, and deducted from your credit card.

## CASH

You can organise cash from either the foreign desk at your bank or any Bureau De Changes, which are found at most international airports or in larger shopping centres.

Most international hotels will have a small exchange desk, but their fees are much higher than the banks or Bureau De

Changes. Do not exchange currency with any unauthorised person as you will most likely be cheated!

Always make sure that you have some cash for the country that you are visiting first or transiting through so that you can pay for taxis, tips, beverages and so on.

Before making your exchange, confirm how much money you may bring into a country. There are laws restricting the amount of cash that can be carried, and these restrictions change periodically.



**You can only apply for foreign exchange from 60 days before the departure date up to 24 hours before departure.**

## PRE-PAID CURRENCY CARD

Also known as cash cars, pre-paid currency cards are a personal favourite as you get a pre-loaded cash card that can be used at ATMs, shops, hotels and restaurants worldwide. It is a new secure and convenient way to manage your budget when travelling overseas.

It's pre-loaded with your budget funds. It is not connected to your bank accounts and has 24/7 global assistance. However, it is just like a credit card. It must be looked after carefully and signed at the back once you receive it.

You should check your transactions regularly. This can be done online from a secure browser on the supplier website, similar to how you would normally bank online. Keep your PIN number private! Always keep your card in sight and make sure that it isn't being "skimmed".

Should you lose or have your card stolen, report this to card service provider immediately. Make sure that you have the international number written down in a separate place.

### **CASH PASSPORT**

The Travelex cash passport is available in United States (US) Dollars, Great Britain Pound (GBP) Sterling, Euros and Australian Dollars. It makes use of the Mastercard and Visa options, which means it can be used at any facility that accepts Mastercard or Visa.

It is available at numerous banks and bureaux de change, including ABSA, Bidvest, FNB, American Express Retail Foreign Exchange (Tourvest) and Travelex Retail Foreign Exchange (FX Africa).

There is also a door-to-door option, which allows you to organise the passport from the comfort of your home, which is a great help for persons with disabilities.

You must be able to offer proof of payment to their account before you will get your card, so make sure that you have access to internet banking and have the proof of payment with you. Once you have your card, sign the back of your passport and memorise your PIN.

MasterCard doesn't allow you to change your passport while the Visa Cash Passport PIN can be updated after registering the card on your person page on the Travelex [website](#).

There are a number of countries where the use of cash passport is not allowed as they are subject to US economic sanctions. If you attempt to withdraw cash from an ATM or use your card at merchants in any of these countries, your request will be declined. Some of these countries include Myanmar (Burma), Cuba, Iran and Sudan.

A great benefit of the cash passport is that if you lose your card or it is stolen, your funds can be replaced quickly. A dedicated card services team is on hand 24 hours a day, seven days a week, to help.

You can also report any strange activity or potential compromises.

After your trip, you will have to convert your foreign currency back into South African rands. This should be done ideally 10 days after your last purchase and within 30 days of returning to South Africa.

The balance on your card can be withdrawn from an ATM or you can visit your bank to have the balance transferred to your account.

Your cash passport remains valid until the expiry date displayed on the front of the card (usually three years) even with zero balance. So, you can easily reload it for your next trip. Just take the card and the necessary documents to the branch where you first purchased it.

### **TRAVELLERS CHEQUES**

You have to go to the bank and book travellers cheques in the currency and denominations that you require. Should you be travelling to many different countries, you will have to order amounts in each currency or you can choose to take a globally accepted currency like US Dollars, Euros or British Pounds.

There is an initial cost of issuing and converting the money from your South African rand. Then, each time you cash a cheque, there will be a further transaction fee and conversion cost from the currency they are issued in to the currency of the country you are visiting.

With this option, quite a bit of your hard-earned holiday spending money will go on bank charges.

Once the cheques are printed, you will then need to return to the bank and sign each cheque on receipt. When cashing them in, you also have to sign.

This was cumbersome and very difficult for persons with disabilities as your signature had to match perfectly otherwise the receiver would think that you had stolen them! **R**

# Air travel

For domestic or regional travel, often a flight and car hire option is easier than many hours in a car, but this limits the number of equipment you can take with you on your trip. For international travel, it is best to look for flights with the least number of connections as it is tiring to travel for so many hours. If a direct flight is not an option, look for a short stopover that allows you to rest properly between long flights.

When booking flights, always contact the airline after making the reservation to confirm any assistance that you may need to board the plane.

You may have to supply information about your disability and the equipment that you use. If you use a service dog, arrangement needs to be made, and confirmed before arriving at the airport for departure. Most airlines have facilities available for people with disabilities.

## CHECK-IN ASSISTANCE

Assistance staff or the passenger aid unit (PAU) is often available to assist persons with disabilities. This service has to be booked prior to your departure and can be done through your travel agent or by contacting the Medical Assistance Department of the airline directly.

Should you be making a booking online, complete the reservation, receive the reference number and then call the airline to confirm that you will be accepted on the flight. There are international rules that allow a certain number of passengers who need assistance per cabin crew member. Thus, your flight will not always be guaranteed!

There are various requirements and codes that are used to prepare the assistance staff and inform them of the equipment that will be required. This includes information on:

- Your age and disability;
- Any assistance required during the flight (like assistance with eating or drinking):

- Your ability to sit upright for take-off and landing;
- Any medical assistance (such as oxygen on the flight).

The following codes will be added according to your needs as a people with mobility impairments:

- WCHR to indicate that you can climb stairs, but need to use a wheelchair to the steps to board the aircraft.
- WCHS to indicate that you can't climb stairs, but can walk within the aircraft.
- WCHC to indicate that you are completely immobile and need assistance to your seat.

Please always check with the airline that your medical needs have been confirmed before the departure date. If possible, take a printed copy of this with on the trip or have it on your cell phone.

Even if you have checked in online, always arrive with as much time as possible before departure to get your boarding pass as this guarantees your place on the flight. Please also inform the check-in clerk that you require assistance so that they can confirm it in the reservation.

Should you have your own wheelchair, please make sure that you get a luggage tag with the correct city code placed on your chair so that it can be traced and won't get lost.

Once checked-in, go to the area assigned for passengers who require assistance. Make sure that the assistance staff record arrival and the flight that you are travelling on. They will then assign a person to assist you through security to the waiting area near your boarding gate (if you are boarding through a chute) or the PAUs.

They must give you a time when they will be collecting you to begin the boarding process. This should be before the other passengers

board. This will give you time to plan any last minute visits to the bathroom should they be necessary. It is also your right to visit the restaurants, lounges or shops. You do not have to stay in the accessible lounge or waiting area.

You are also entitled to stay in your own chair, should you have one, until you have to be transferred onto either the “slipper” chair to go down the aisle of the plane, or the “Washington” chair to be carried up the stairs and taken down the aisle to your seat. The same applies with disembarkation.

The airline must not take your chair to the baggage carousels as this usually causes damage, and a whole lot extra transfers for you. Please make sure that you know your rights!

### **IN-FLIGHT ASSISTANCE**

Very few international airlines have on-board toilet facilities for people with disabilities. While they do have the “slipper” chair, it is extremely difficult to get this into the cubicle and manoeuvre it around on your own. The cubicles usually do not cater for more than one person at a time.

The cabin crew are not there to assist your personal needs. They will assist you to the cubicle should they have time, but they are usually extremely busy. Therefore, it is better to travel with your own companion to assist you.

Your travel agent or the airline can also assist with booking the best seating nearest to the most accessible toilet at the time of booking as they can see the layout of the aircraft.

It is always difficult to move around an aircraft. Most people with disabilities have “ways” to cope with inaccessibility. For example, a blanket can always be used to cover you should you need to catheterise into a plastic container or empty a leg bag.

### **CHECKED LUGGAGE**

There is nothing more frustrating than trying to show someone which piece of luggage is

yours for them to take off the carousel when all the pieces look similar, especially now that most people are plastic wrapping their luggage for security purposes. Tie a brightly coloured ribbon to your handle for ease of identification.

Use a big label with your name and contact details on it. Stick a second label on the inside so that if your outer label is lost that you’re still able to identify your bag.

In the event of your bag going missing, it is hugely helpful to have a list of what was in it. Carry an accurate description of your luggage (for example, the make and colour) with an itemised list of the major things inside. This will help in tracing the bag and in any claims should it be permanently lost.

Remember, since 2001, you are not to carry items that have sharp edges (like nail files, clippers or scissors) in your hand luggage nor any liquids or gels that are in containers larger than 100 millilitres. Put your normal liquid soaps (like body wash, shampoo and conditioner) into smaller containers.

Then, put these smaller containers in a zip-lock sealed bag within your check-in luggage. Make sure the tops are sealed to prevent any spillage! You don’t want your clothes soggy and ruined by a leaky toothpaste tube.

Don’t forget your make-up and perfume. These should also be in smaller quantities. You don’t want to throw expensive items into the customs bins when they are refused in the country.

### **HAND LUGGAGE**

Most airlines require that you only have one piece of carry-on luggage per person. This item should weigh less than seven kilograms and meet the specific measurements of the airline. Often, your hand luggage needs to be a small, slim bag.

Be careful with what you pack in your hand luggage as there are many restricted items. Obviously, this is where you need to carry any valuables such as jewellery, money, passports, cameras, laptops and phones.

Ideally, you should leave any expensive jewellery at home. If you must take it, wear it or carry it in a money belt on your person.

Declare any cameras, laptops or other electronic goods and accessories before travelling internationally to prove on re-entry that you didn't purchase these items on the trip. If you don't, you may have to pay import duty on second hand goods!

## TOP AIR TRAVEL TIPS

Here are the top 10 tips for travelling by air:

- After making an internet reservation, check that the dates and times on your reservations is correct.
- Immediately after confirming your reservation, contact the airline and confirm any assistance that you need by completing the relevant forms.
- Make sure that the airline knows what type of mobility aid you use. It is your right to stay in your own wheelchair up to the aircraft when embarking and from the aircraft when disembarking. You may insist that the staff fetch your chair if they have sent it through to the terminal in error.
- If you are driving to the airport, contact Airports Company South Africa (ACSA) for discounted parking as most long-term parking areas are not serviced by accessible busses. Three of the major airports in South Africa are offering **discounted parking** for wheelchair users. Another option is to use a parking service where your car is picked up from the airport and stored, then brought back to the airport on your return.
- Mark your luggage with a coloured ribbon or tag for easy identification.
- Ensure that you arrive at the airport to check in around 90 minutes before a domestic flight and three hours before an international flight.
- Ask to be taken through security and stay near your boarding gate or at the allocated area for PAU boarding.
- Leave enough time of a visit to the bathroom before boarding.
- Always keep your boarding pass for reward points. **R**

## TOP AIR TRAVEL TIPS

Top tips for travelling by air

### Double check date and time

... on your flight reservation after booking.



### Confirm the assistance

... that you need as soon as your flight is booked.

### Discounted parking

... for wheelchair users are available at some of the major airports. Be sure to enquire about it.



### Clearly mark luggage

... and ensure a sticker with your details are inside your bag as added security.

### Arrive early

... at least 90 minutes for local flights and three hours for international travel.



### Bathroom visit before flight

... is a must as the on-flight bathroom might not be accessible.



# Road travel

With beautiful landscapes, many chose to travel by road when travelling locally. This does require some planning, especially when travelling longer distances.

## SELF-DRIVE

The South African road infrastructure is quite extensive, although our road surfaces suffer with pot holes in many areas. Driving between cities and towns is a viable option and, given the stunning scenery in many parts of the country, a highly enjoyable one.

However, South Africa is a huge country not easily traversed in a day. So, plan your journeys carefully. If you're not used to driving long distances, rather break the journey as fatigue is a major contributing factor in motor vehicle accidents.

Before setting off on your trip, ensure that your car isn't due for a service while you are away. Some manufacturers are quite strict with maintenance plans. If you go over the mileage markers for service, you will have to pay for the service.

Rather book the car in early and have the service done before you travel. Also get your hand control checked to make sure that all is in order.

Petrol stations are found on both the main and country roads. Most of them open 24 hours a day although some keep shorter hours. The distances between towns (and therefore petrol stations) are considerable in some parts of the country. Remember to check the fuel gauge before passing up the opportunity to fill up.

Various types of petrol are available namely, unleaded, 97 octane, 95 octane or 93 octane ("super" or "premium"). The 95 octane and 93 octane petrol is available at higher altitude. At the coast, your choice is between 95 and 97-octane. Diesel is available with 0,05 percent sulphur content and 0,005 percent sulphur content.

Should you own an electric car, the charging stations are few and far between. Using this vehicle needs careful planning.

Most of the national roads are tarred and in a reasonably good condition. The more rural the road, the more likely it is to be poorly surfaced with pot-holes. The general speed limit on South African national highways, urban freeways and other major routes is 120 kilometre per hour (km/h).

On secondary (rural) roads it is 80 km/h. Residential areas are usually 60 km/h. Always check the road signs to ensure you are travelling at the correct speed.

National, regional and metro signs have blue and green backgrounds. Tourist destinations usually have a brown background.

Before you set off, check your route. Many of the national roads between the major centres are toll roads. Check the toll fees before you leave, and make sure that you have either a credit card or cash to pay. Please note that they do not accept debit cards.

Current information on the conditions of roads can be obtained through the Automobile Association (AA). They also provides invaluable guides for road users with trip maps tailored for specific destinations and information for tourists on accommodation enroute.

There are many interactive websites that will help you to plan your routes. It is always advisable to have a route map app with a GPS system like Ways or Google Maps as this will assist you to avoid traffic, build ups or delays.

## CAR HIRE

If you don't have your own mode of transport, you can hire vehicles. Most of the well-known car hire companies offer vehicles fitted with hand controls. Often these cars are

upper market, which makes the daily rates expensive for the average person.

People with disabilities should be able to hire a car in one of the cheaper ranges, however, then they have to get someone else to drive the car. An extra driver is levied when the person with a disability is paying the care hire, but not driving themselves, even though they are unable to drive the car.

The different car hire companies require different lead times to make specific vehicles available. It is advised to make your arrangements as far in advance as possible.

The hand control systems vary and may not be suited to everyone's needs. Therefore, you should get detailed information about the specific system prior to committing yourself to the rental.



**The hand control systems vary and may not be suited to everyone's needs.**

Current daily rates for rental under seven days including Super Cover (98 percent insurance) and 200 km free daily, depending on the car hire company and car.

Please note that there are always the following pre-requisites when hiring a car:

- The designated driver must have a valid driver's licence.
- A credit card with enough credit for the fuel deposit and insurance excess is required. This will be removed once the car has been returned with a full tank and undamaged.
- Should anyone else be driving the car, their name must be given and an extra driver fee will be levied.

Hire cars are more likely to require unleaded petrol, but check before you set off.

The following costs are generally included in your car hire quote:

- Daily rental;
- Unlimited or limited mileage (depending on the rental);
- Insurance with a standard (90 percent) or super cover (98 percent) option that includes personal accident insurance, collision damage waiver and theft loss waiver;
- Airport Surcharge; and
- VAT and tourism levies.

Super cover is recommended and this means that the insurance excess is less in the case of an accident. Often, the cost is not that much more overall.

The costs that are not included in your care hire quote includes:

- One way fees (if your drop-off and pick-up points are not the same);
- Pick-up and drop-off costs;
- Extra driver;
- Extra kilometres over the basic kilometres included in the various packages (rates are available at time of hire); and
- Fuel deposit and insurance excess.

The deposits are refunded when the car is returned undamaged and with a full tank. Be thorough with the pre-inspection to ensure that any defects are noted. Otherwise, you will be held liable!

## BUSES

The Bus Rapid Transit System (BRT) is designed to provide a high quality and affordable transport system that is fast and safe. While these buses were designed to be accessible, they are situated within the centre of the roadway, which isn't always easy for wheelchair users to access independently.

Most of the major cities in South Africa have a BRT systems that runs through the centre of the city and to popular tourist destinations within the city.

Always be sure to check whether there is a BRT system in the city you are visiting and whether the routes go into the areas that you plan to visit. Take note of the bus times as

## TOP DRIVING TIPS

Top tips for travelling by road

**Get your car serviced**  
If it is close to the time that your car needs to be serviced, rather get it done before your trip.



**Fill up**  
Make sure that you have a full tank of petrol before your journey. Also, when there is an opportunity, fill up to avoid running out of petrol on the long stretches between petrol stations.



**Have cash for tolls**  
Either carry cash or a credit card for the various toll gates on the highways. Debit cards are not accepted.



**Take frequent breaks**  
Be sure to stop every few hours for the bathroom and to rest. Ideally, you should get out of the car and move around. Driving tired is as dangerous as driving drunk.



**Drive within your capabilities**  
Be sure to always drive at a speed that is comfortable for you. Rather move into a slower lane and let fast vehicles pass than feeling pressured to drive at a speed that you are not confident at.

**BUCKLE UP!**  
It is always very important to wear your seatbelt regardless of the speed or distance you are travelling.



this service only runs for specific times in a day.

There are several long-distance coach services, but these have stair access. The on-board bathrooms aren't accessible to wheelchair users.

Cape Town and Johannesburg has city sightseeing buses. The lower levels of these buses are wheelchair accessible. These buses travel to the top attractions in the city with some tours offering audio guides in multiple languages, and discounts for children, seniors and visitors with disabilities.

### TAXIS

There are many taxis and e-hailing services of which some can offer assistance with transport. However, there is no guarantee that the drivers are knowledgeable on assisting people with disabilities.

Uber Assist is available in South Africa, but the service is limited.



### Uber Assist is available in South Africa, but the service is limited.

Minibus taxis are privately owned and difficult to regulate. Some drivers might offer assistance, but not many do, especially during peak traffic hours.

Should you convince a driver to load you and your wheelchair manually into taxi, they will charge up to three times the standard fare. These vehicles have no restraint system nor is there public liability insurance for passengers.

The positive about this service is that they are stationed outside every transport hub, shopping centre and public building. They are also willing to drop you off wherever you want along their routes.

**TOP ROAD TRAVEL TIPS**

Here are some top tips for if you want to travel by road in South Africa:

- Check whether your car requires a service at least two weeks before you travel.
- A breakdown service card is a must whether it is from your insurance company or an AA membership and card.
- Fill up your petrol, check your oil and tyre pressure, clean the windscreen and ensure the washer container's water is full before travelling.
- Check the weather conditions for the day of travel and dress accordingly with a jersey handy in case it's cool or sunglasses and short sleeves if warm.
- Plan your route and stops ahead of time – ideally at most major brand petrol stations that have accessible bathrooms.
- Get enough rest before you leave and stop if you feel tired as driving tired is just as dangerous as driving drunk.
- Have cash or the appropriate cards handy for tolls.
- Drive within your own capabilities such as staying in the slower lane rather than feel pressured to travel fast in the other lanes when you are not comfortable and confident.
- Eat and drink sufficient fluids while travelling and be sure to get out of the car when stopping to move around.
- Carry a water spray bottle within the car to cool down should the day be hot and you do not have an aircon.
- Don't forget to buckle up! **R**

**RAIL TRAVEL**

# Rail travel

Most of the existing train tracks in South Africa are the standard narrow gauge. Therefore, the rolling stock is not wheelchair or mobility aid accessible with steep steps to enter the carriages and narrow passages. It may be accessible to ambulatory people with mobility impairment.

The newer commuter trains do have extra space at the entry doors to the carriages, but there is still no step-free access from the platforms.

Shosholozza Meyl is a long distance passenger rail service with sleeper accommodation and dining facilities. There are communal ablution facilities at each end of the carriages. Passengers can transport their vehicles on the train as well.

Routes include return routes from two hubs. You can travel from Johannesburg to Cape Town, Durban, Port Elizabeth and East London. Alternatively, you can travel from

Cape Town to Queenstown and East London.

Metrorail Western Cape has the following statement with regards to facilities for people with disabilities: "Advise Metrorail of any special needs requirements by contacting the nearest ticket office. Staff will assist and offer advice regarding assistance, which is available by prior arrangement."

The Gautrain, based in Johannesburg, is wheelchair accessible. This rapid rail system has two routes. The first route runs from the south to the north from Park Station through Rosebank, Sandton, Marlborough, Midrand, Centurion and Pretoria to Hatfield. The second runs west to east from Sandton, Marlborough and Rhodesfield to OR Tambo International Airport.

There are shuttle bus services running into the surrounding suburbs from each station. The buses have very steep ramps for access, therefore, assistance is required. **R**

# Accessible accommodation

While many places advertise rooms that are adapted to suit the needs of people with disabilities, these often range from the absolutely useless to the ridiculously overdone! Friendly, knowledgeable and positive advices are often welcomed by the managers, so please do share your feedback.

To avoid booking a room that is completely inaccessible, you should consider the following:

## RESEARCHING ACCESSIBILITY

It is always better to use the phrase “wheelchair accessible” when looking for accessible accommodation directly on a search engine. Alternatively, you can visit websites that offer filters to find the right room.

Try [Bookings.com](#), [Disabled Travel](#) or [Disabled Holidays](#). Select the filters “wheelchair accessible” and “step-free shower” to find the rooms that have been adapted for wheelchair users.

Once you have chosen an establishment, contact them and ask for specifications like the width of doorways, height of beds and toilets, and space within bathrooms or access to showers.

A picture is always better than words, so ask them to send photos of the facilities before you book. Confirm the booking again before you depart.

## ACCESSIBLE ROOMS

Should you be travelling alone, check your room on arrival before the porter leaves to ensure that you can use all the facilities like light switches, plugs and air-conditioning controls. If not, ask the porter to move any obstacles like chairs or beds.

Your check should include the cupboard! Most adapted rooms have lower rails,

but they keep the hangars on the upper rails.

Also consider the placement of plugs. These are sometimes under fixed counter tops that make it inaccessible. Again, as the porter to plug in any of the appliances that you have brought along.

I always travel with a three metre extension chord and a multi-plug that can assist me to access my equipment (like my laptop) even when in bed.



**I always travel with a three metre extension chord that can assist me to access my equipment even when in bed.**



## ACCESSIBLE BATHROOMS

I’ve made the mistake of using a flap-down shower seat that was too high and too small. It resulted in me hanging onto the rail with one hand, washing with the other while the deadweight of my dangling legs threatened to pull me off.

If you are travelling alone, ask the porter to lower the shower hose to a height that you can reach so that you can direct it when you are in the shower.

Check that the bath towels are within reach as well. Ask for extra towels to use as padding on shower seats or chairs with sharp edges to prevent bruising or sores.

If there is no roll-in shower, and you are strong enough, ask for a plastic chair to be placed in the shower and transfer across. Take care when transferring with wet floors!

An adjustable shower seat should be placed in the shower area. If not, perhaps you can arrange for one through the many companies that offer short-term rentals for assistive devices.

Visit [Disability Info South Africa](#) for a full list of companies and the assistive devices that they have available.

Note that these companies might not be able to assist when you visit a smaller town or out of the way place. Do your research before you travel so that you know what options are available to you.

“

**Do your research before you travel so that you know what options are available to you.**

### DINING AND ACTIVITIES

If you cannot get your wheelchair under the dining table, ask for the table to be raised. This can be done by putting soup bowls upside down with side plates on top underneath the table legs.

If you're still unable to eat at the table, ask for a tray to put onto your lap. Be careful not to put a hot plate directly onto your lap!

Most hotel restaurants serve a buffet with waiters who can assist you with dishing up and carrying your plate to your table. Find a seat that will allow you to get to the buffet without having to navigate the entire restaurant.

Just make sure that you are seated where you can get to the buffet to choose the different courses without moving the entire restaurant to do so!

Should you want to participate in any activities like game drives or tours, confirm before or when you make your booking that they will be able to accommodate you to avoid any disappointment. 

## CHECK-IN CHECKLIST

When arriving in your hotel room, be sure to check that you can reach everything!

**Can you use all the switches, plugs and controls?**

If not, ask the porter to move any obstacles like furniture.



**Can you independently plug in your appliances?**

If not, ask the porter to plug in your appliances or ask for an extension chord.



**Can you reach the hangers in the cupboard?**

If not, ask these to be moved to a lower railing.



**Can you reach the shower hose and towels in the bathroom?**

If not, ask for these to be moved.



**Is there a shower seat in the shower?**

If there is no shower seat, ask about having a plastic chair placed in the shower, or research companies that hire out assistive devices.

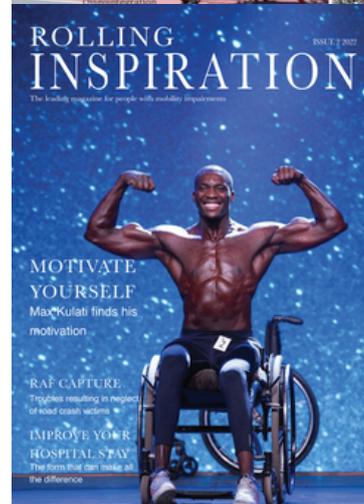
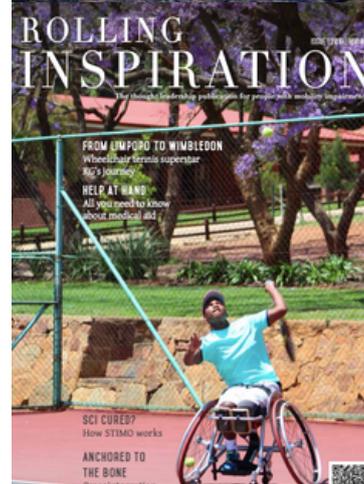


# Read the ROLLING INSPIRATION magazine



## FOR FREE

Scan the QR Code with your smartphone and read or download our latest magazine for free.



# ROLLING INSPIRATION

The leading lifestyle publication for people with mobility impairments